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ABSTRACT

This checklist for beginning teachers (as well as school administrators, mentors, teacher supervisors, and student teachers) includes five sections: "Prepare Personally and Professionally" (the last year in college and getting hired as a teacher); "Success on the Job" (know when to say no, take advantage of a mentor, network to keep current, stress management and self-care, and know what one does and why); "Communication Skills" (telephoning parents, written communication, parent conferences, and communicating with colleagues and administrators); "Classroom Management" (create workable plans, access students' interests and knowledge, accept today's students, vary teaching strategies to reach today's students, and the special needs student); and "Advice from Cyberspace" (ideas gathered for new teachers by posting a message soliciting information on various message boards). (Contains 70 bibliographic references.) (SM)

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Bright Ideas:
A Pocket Mentor
for Beginning Teachers

Mary C. Clement

ED 467 782

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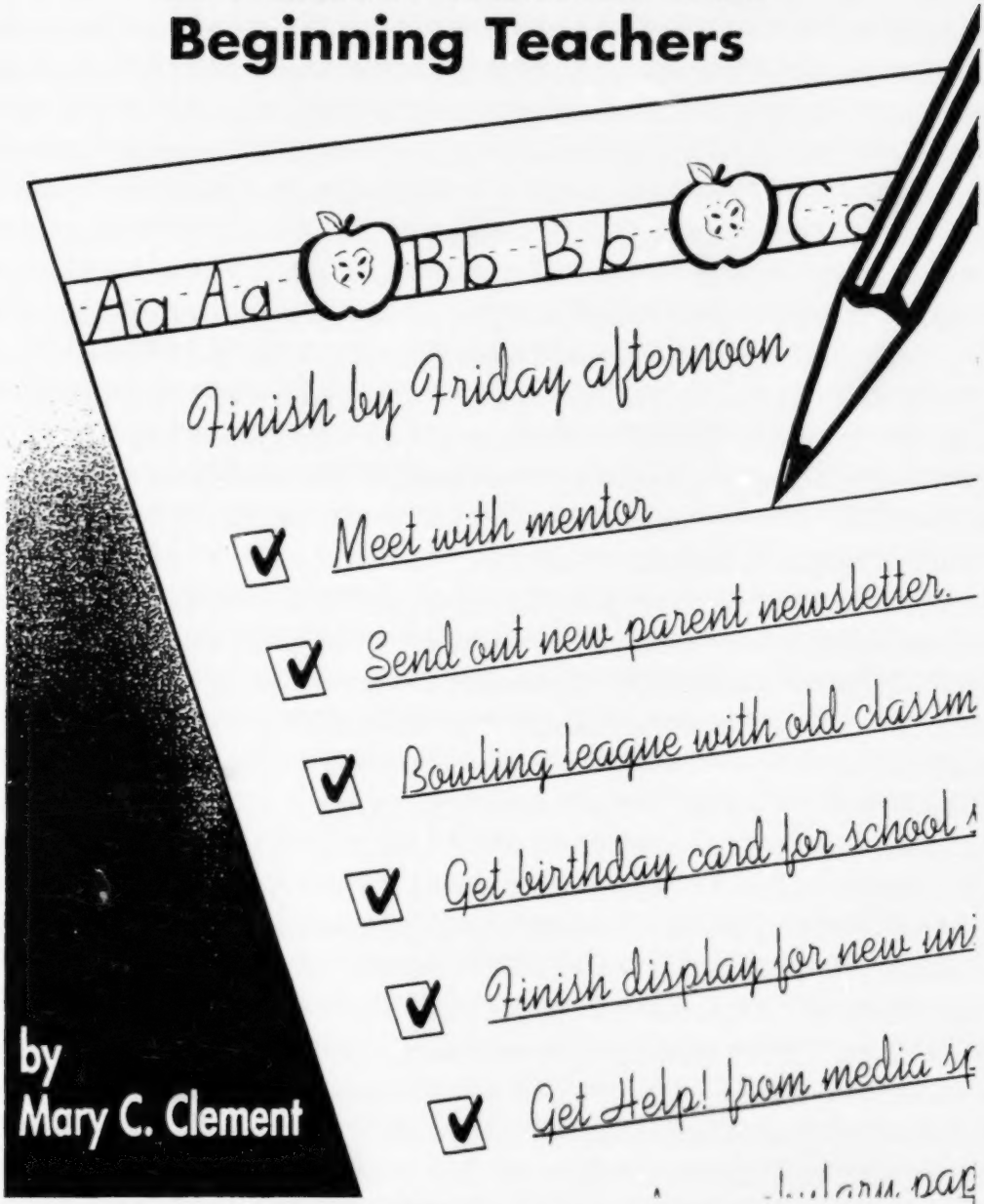
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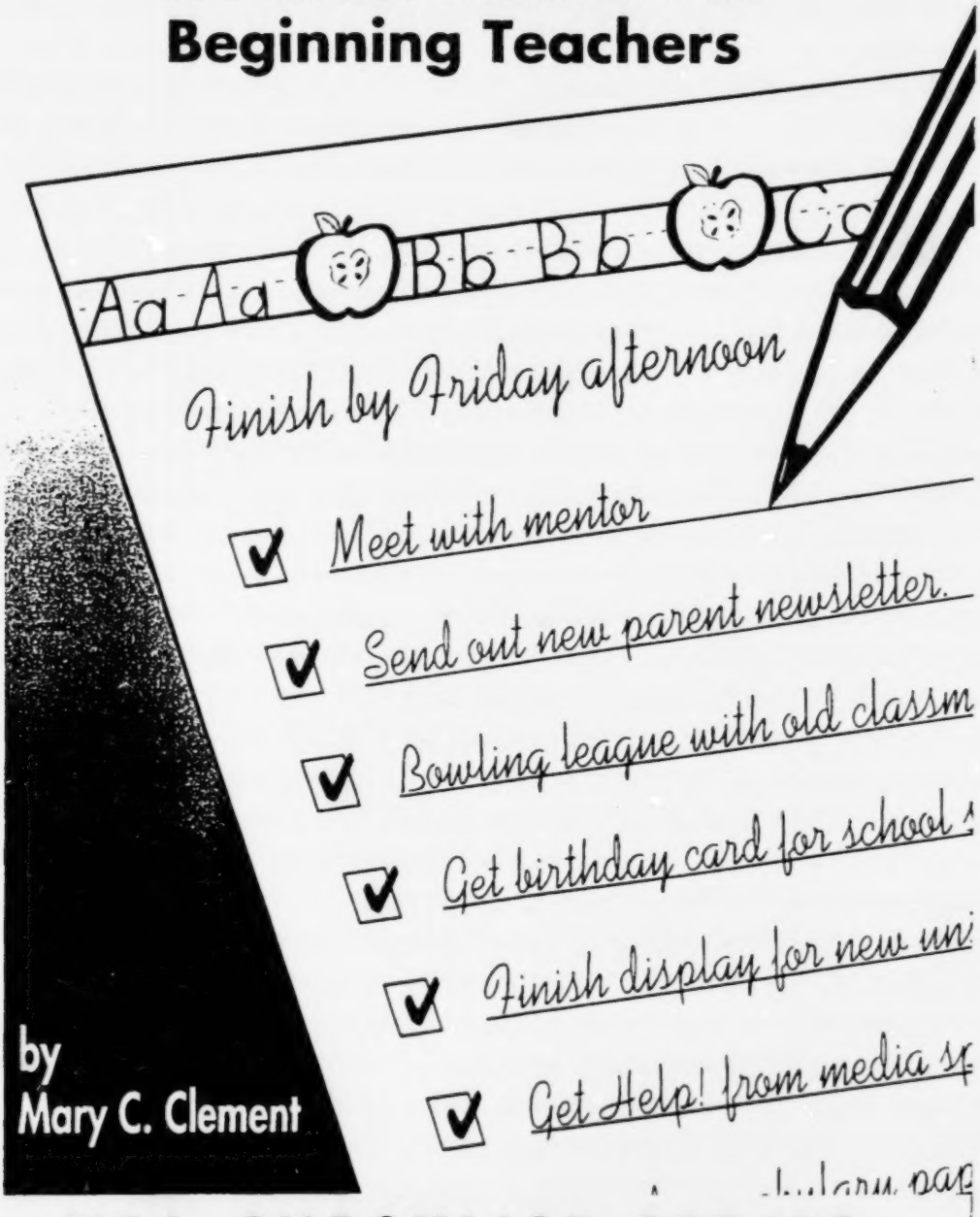
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary C. Clement was a high-school foreign language teacher for eight years. After earning her doctorate from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1991, she served as the director of the Beginning Teacher Program at Eastern Illinois University for six years. She has taught seminars for first-year teachers and developed mentor programs. She is currently the director of Field Experiences and Student Teaching at Berry College in Mt. Berry, Georgia.

ADVISORY PANEL

Marion Trainor
Retired Elementary Teacher and Media Specialist
Gross Pointe Park, Michigan

Evelyn J. Mims
Retired English and Drama Teacher
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Mozella Locklear
Retired Teacher, Alamance-Burlington,
North Carolina

Vincent N. Holcomb
Teacher, St. Mary Parish School Board, Louisiana

Lorene H. Freeman
Retired 5th Grade Teacher, Hudson Elementary
Hudson, North Carolina

Neil Chivington
School Counselor and Social Worker,
School District 6, Buxton, Maine

Jack Bradford
Math Teacher, Flathead High School,
Kalispell, Montana

Carlita Square
Rialto, California

INTRODUCTION

We have all heard the negative comments about a teacher's first year in the classroom. "It was sink or swim every day." "It can only be described as a trial by fire." "It was like being thrown to the wolves." Research tells us that many new teachers leave the profession early in their careers. Yet, many first-year teachers not only survive at their jobs, they succeed and thrive in their classrooms. What are their secrets? What makes some teachers say, "I'm so glad that I became a teacher" or "I can't wait to try these ideas with next year's class"? These teachers have discovered the secrets of becoming established and of managing the day-to-day challenges of teaching.

Once upon a time I too was a first-year teacher, struggling to organize five high school classes a day while becoming established in a town I had never heard of until the district advertised for a Spanish teacher. When I wrote this my job was to work with beginning teachers, providing inservice programs and assisting school districts to establish mentor programs for their teachers. From my experience and research, I have found many things that successful first-year teachers do to help themselves during that first year. Here are summaries of those positive things, in checklist form for you.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THIS BOOKLET?

The checklists in this publication, developed from tips by veteran teachers, are designed to increase a first-year teacher's chances for success. Student teachers, beginning teachers, mentors, teacher supervisors, and even principals will find the tips in these checklists helpful and the suggested readings invaluable.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOKLET

In **Preparing Personally and Professionally**, a soon-to-be teacher can learn about how to strategize for a job search, how to become more marketable in the competitive market, and once hired, how to prepare, prepare, prepare!

Many beginning teachers take on too much—extra-curricular activities, sponsorhips, extra work, etc. In **Success On the Job**, veteran teachers offer tips on how to cope with time commitments, saying "No" occasionally, using mentors and networks for both professional development and support, and how to recognize and manage stress.

Often, first-year teachers need to sharpen their **Communication Skills**. This section offers some solutions for beginners, from planning telephone calls, letters, and parent conferences to informing colleagues and administrators about your work, all with confidence and competence.

Many first-year teachers suffer when it comes to the **Classroom Management** aspect of teaching. Included with this section are tips and techniques that the first-year teacher will find helpful to better manage your classroom.

Advice from Cyberspace—a section gathered using the Internet—is a quick look at what some veteran teachers thought were the most important strategies for success as a beginner. You may find some repetition, that ought to tell you something!

PREPARE PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY

Many teachers enter the profession well-prepared to teach children, but are you ready to job hunt? And, when you get your job, are you ready for that first day? This section gives you a brief overview of how to hunt down your first job, how to prepare for interviewing, and, once you're hired, how to prepare for the first day.

YOUR LAST YEAR IN COLLEGE

Getting your first teaching job can be difficult. To prepare yourself during your last year of college, follow these helpful tips.

1. Visit your college's career planning center at least a year before you seek your first job.

2. Gather information about job market trends.

3. Find out about the supply and demand of new teachers in your area, your state, and other states. Many new teachers are willing to move to an area that needs teachers to gain experience. With one to three years of experience, they can then compete for positions in other schools.

4. Become familiar with the teacher certification requirements for your state and any other states where you might wish to teach. In some states, you can receive additional endorsements to your teaching certificate that will make you much more employable. For example, someone studying to be a high school science teacher may be eligible for an endorsement to teach mathematics by completing a small amount of additional course work and completing an application.

5. Prepare a cover letter, resume, and portfolio that will work for you.

6. Learn interviewing techniques.

   - Practice a firm handshake.
   - Be prepared for typical questions such as, "Why do you want to be a teacher?" "What is your philosophy of education?" "What do you plan to be doing five years from now?"

- ▶ Select one good suit for your job interview—the way that you look is very important.
- ▶ Always arrive a few minutes early for the interview.

7 Attend a job fair.

8 Develop a list of questions that you can ask during your job interview. For example, "When hired, how soon will I be able to work in my classroom to create bulletin boards and arrange desks?"

9 READ:

- ▶ *Educator's Job Search*, Martin Kimeldorf
- ▶ *The Job Search Handbook for Educators*, Association for School, College, and University Staffing
- ▶ *Pitfalls and Potholes: Avoiding the Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers*, Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray.

YOU'RE HIRED

Your preparation continues after you're hired. Your first day can be as intimidating to you as it is to your new students. It's best to get as much as possible done in advance. The checklist below gives some ideas on what you could do to prepare for that first day.

1 Decorate the classroom with bulletin boards and a large calendar.

2 Count the number of desks in your classroom and compare this to the number of students on your class roster. Request at least two extra

desks for new students who may not be on the roster.

Locate your books and supplies. Request at least two extra copies of books in case students are added to the class. Don't buy supplies with your own money until you have thoroughly checked supply rooms and asked veteran teachers about what is available.

Meet the custodian and secretary and get to know them. The support staff of your school can really help you.

Take care of all the paperwork you can before the students arrive, including:

- ▶ health insurance forms for yourself.
- ▶ a parking permit.
- ▶ payroll and income tax deduction forms—you will want a paycheck!
- ▶ district personnel records—this varies from district to district, but you will receive some forms to fill out and return to the district office.
- ▶ membership forms for your professional organization or union.

Practice driving from your new home or apartment to your school at the regular time of day that you will need to leave. It can be very embarrassing to be late on the first day that students arrive! Allow extra time in order to be early, especially the first week.

Practice how you will introduce yourself to your classes. Students are even more worried about who you are than you are about who they are.

Smile as the students enter the room the first day. You have prepared for years for this moment and you are **READY.**

9 READ:

- *Countdown to the First Day of School*, Leo M. Schell and Paul Burden
- *Teacher, The Children are Here: A Guide for Teachers of the Elementary Grades*, Dianne Appleman and Johanna McClear.
- *A First-Year Teacher's Guidebook for Success*, Bonnie Williamson.

SUCCESS ON THE JOB

You've gotten your job, your room is ready, and you are ready, but you think "How am I going to survive this year?" This section includes some tips for success in your first job and beyond.

KNOW WHEN TO SAY "NO"

Schools are the center of many extracurricular and sports activities for students, and school districts need teachers to sponsor and coach these activities. You may be asked during a job interview if you will serve as a coach or sponsor, or you may be asked to do so at the beginning of the school year. Answering yes to this question will certainly put you at an advantage in getting, and perhaps keeping, your first job. If, during your job interview, you agreed to sponsor an extracurricular activity or to coach a sport, then you will need to follow through with your commitment during your first year of teaching. Before saying yes, consider these ideas:

1 Create opportunities for your students through your involvement with activities that really interest you. If chess is a favorite hobby of yours, then your help on the chess team will be invaluable. For example, I love to cook foreign foods, that made my help with the French and Spanish clubs fun for both my students and myself.

2 Support the activities that others sponsor by attending, cheering, and complimenting the students and teachers involved. Making a positive comment to students as they enter your room is a first step in winning the student over and avoiding discipline problems.

3 Carefully consider any request to serve as a volunteer or sponsor of extra duties. Be prepared with your answer before someone asks the question.

4 Practice saying, "While that activity is such a good one, my classroom teaching comes first." Many beginning teachers have told me that their teaching suffered because they took on too many time-consuming extra duties the first year, when

they were also developing all new lesson plans for each class.

5 Remember that it is easier to say no initially than to say yes and then try to get out of a commitment! It is also better to do a good job with one activity than to do a mediocre job with two or three.

6 Sponsoring an activity will take about twice as much time as anyone ever tells you it will take. Ask questions about the expectations and time commitments before accepting a new duty.

7 Be prepared to be "in the public eye" as a coach or sponsor. Parents, local newspaper reporters, and other community members will be watching your team's performance and could be critical of you.

8 Be ready to answer parent phone calls if you release your home phone number. Many coaches diplomatically state that they can be reached at the school's phone number and also announce their office hours to receive calls. Others invite parents to call them at home.

9 Don't accept a duty for which you have no training or background. Many states require that coaches complete college course work in coaching and first aid. Cheerleading sponsors need training in gymnastics and first aid, too.

Working with students outside of class will certainly help you to get to know them better. You will also have the opportunity to become acquainted with parents and community members when you sponsor extracurricular events. Besides, you will have fun with sports and school events. Consider each request to volunteer as an opportunity for you to become involved and then choose wisely. I still remember how much fun it was to drive a convertible in the homecoming parade as a student council sponsor when I was a teacher,

especially since I never got to do this when I was a student!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A MENTOR

Many school districts establish mentor programs where veteran teachers are paired with newly-hired ones. The veterans assume the roles of mentors—guiding, helping, and befriending the new teachers. If your district does not assign a mentor to you, you will probably find yourself turning to one or two other teachers and asking their advice anyway. Whether the mentor pairing is formal or informal, you can gain a lot of knowledge and support from working with another experienced teacher.

1 A mentor can help you find materials and supplies in your school. They may be willing to share sample plans and resources from their files.

2 Mentors share their best ideas for classroom management, working with parents, and motivating students. They know the written and unwritten rules of the district. They can share what works and what hasn't worked in the past.

3 A mentor will help you to learn where to turn for help with curriculum questions, or any question.

4 A mentor can direct you to others in the district who can answer specific questions about insurance, sick days, etc.

5 Mentors are good listeners—listening to your ideas and your new strategies. In fact, the mentors with whom I have worked state that they enjoy working with new teachers and learning from them.

6 A mentor cannot do your work for you, or serve as a teacher's aide. It is not the mentor's job to write a test or photocopy reports for you. Remember, most mentors are teaching full time as well.

7 Remember that your mentor is not serving the same role of your student teaching teacher or your university supervisor during that time. You are a professional educator and your mentor is a colleague.

8 If assigned a mentor, find out when and how you will meet with each other and the guidelines of your district's program. In some programs new teachers and mentors receive released time from their classes to work together, while in other districts they meet during lunch or a free period of the day.

9 If you are not assigned a mentor, develop a professional friend down the hall to whom you can turn and trust.

10 You need to determine how confidential the relationship with your mentor will be. In some districts, the new teacher/mentor relationship is completely confidential. If the principal asks the mentor about the new teacher's progress, the mentor has been trained to say, "My role with the new teacher in non-evaluative. I'm sure you will enjoy observing and working with him/her yourself." In other districts this is not the case at all, and a principal could be privy to anything the veteran teacher knows.

11 Your mentor will probably share ideas for relaxing and for positive stress management. After all, your mentor has learned how to balance teaching and a personal life.

12 A mentor should invite you to professional meetings in your field. You and your mentor may want to attend a conference together or to visit

another school district and observe other teachers together.

13 A good mentor will help you reflect upon your teaching and will celebrate your success. Mentors will help you to see the difference between a real crisis and a minor annoyance. They provide perspective to situations.

14 Thank your mentor for his/her guidance. Thank everyone who helps you to become established in your first classroom. One day you will be sharing your expertise with another new teacher.

NETWORK TO KEEP CURRENT

Networking is a very 90s term, referring to groups of associates, colleagues, and friends who band together to share information and help each other.

1 Keep the names and addresses of fellow students in your methods classes and student teaching group and keep in touch with them.

2 Keep in touch with your college professors. Email has become a great way to communicate back to campus.

3 Go out for pizza or coffee with the other newly hired teachers in your building. Share your experiences and laugh together.

4 Plan for discussions with veteran teachers, too. They have a lot to share about surviving.

5 Maintain your memberships in educational honor societies such as Kappa Delta Pi.

6 Join a professional association for reading, math, English, foreign language, social studies, or whatever your field, and participate in their conferences.

7 Join the National Education Association and participate at local, state, and national levels.

8 Attend workshops.

9 Read journals and magazines:

For teachers of all levels:

- ▶*Teaching and Change*, National Education Association
- ▶*Teacher Magazine*, Editorial Projects in Education
- ▶*Teaching Exceptional Children*, Council for Exceptional Children

For the elementary classroom:

- ▶*Creative Classroom*, Children's Television Workshop
- ▶*Learning*, The Education Center
- ▶*Instructor*, Scholastic

For middle school teachers:

- ▶*Middle School Journal*, National Middle School Association

For secondary teachers:

- ▶*Clearinghouse*, Heldref

STRESS MANAGEMENT AND SELF-CARE

Keeping large classes of students productively engaged while managing all the paperwork, administrative jobs, and extracurricular activities involved with teaching can give anyone stress. Everyone has stress and a little stress is actually good for us—motivating us to organize and perform our duties. Too much stress is debilitating. So, the key is stress management—being able to balance the stresses in our lives and our jobs.

1 To reap the benefits from supportive family, colleagues, and friends, be a supportive family member, colleague, and friend. Doing something for someone else will make you feel even better about yourself.

2 Assess the stress that you feel. When does your body revolt and tell you that something is wrong? A constant pain in your shoulder or back may be from stress and so may a recurring sore throat.

3 Try this time management activity. Draw a circle and make a pie chart of how you spend your day. For example, if you sleep eight hours a night, mark one third of your circle "sleep." If you leave the house at 7:30 and return at 5:30, then allow nine hours for work. If you bring two hours worth of work home, include a section for that. Then, draw a circle of how you want to spend your time. How can you change your first circle and make it more like your second circle?

4 Do the same activity listed above, except do the pie chart for a seven day week. If you are not spending your time the way that you want—with family, going out, etc.—you will have more stress. How can you change your time circles?

5 Write down a list of what you spend too much time doing at work and what you need to spend more time doing. Prioritize your day to fit this new pattern of time.

6 Do your toughest work when you are strongest. Decide if you will arrive at work early, stay late, or take work home, but do not try to do all three.

7 Make your workplace less stressful with a plant, a comfortable chair, and a hot pot for making decaffeinated tea or coffee.

8 When the students are with another teacher, close your door and take a few minutes for yourself.

9 Exercise. Walk over the lunch break.

10 Exercise some more. Bike to work. Bowl on Thursdays. Shoot hoops with the kids.

11 Eat a balanced diet. Potato chips are not really leafy vegetables.

12 Plan time into your schedule for "down time." Stop. Rest. Watch a sitcom on TV or take a bubble bath.

13 Enjoy your weekends.

14 Practice stress management with the same regularity with which you would brush your teeth. De-stress at least twice a day!

15 READ: *Inspiring Tranquility: Stress Management and Learning Styles in the Inclusive Classroom*, Rebecca Nunn and Janet Gallaher.

KNOW WHAT YOU DO AND WHY

I became a high school Spanish teacher to open doors to the world for my students. My first Spanish teacher did this for me. Every time I traveled in Spain or Mexico and used the language, I realized this was a skill that others deserved the opportunity to learn. I could hardly wait to teach my students enough Spanish so that they could be interpreters at the United Nations!

I am now the coordinator of our university's beginning teacher program because I know that the first year of teaching is pivotal, perhaps critical, to a teacher's career. I believe that I can share the research about teacher induction with teachers and administrators to effect positive changes in how school districts treat their newly hired teachers. This is my philosophy for doing what I do every day, the reason I get out of bed every morning and go to work. My philosophy is pretty simple, yet it is based upon much reflection and self-evaluation.

All of us who work in education need to have a philosophy for doing what we do.

1 Reflect often upon your job. How can it be improved? How can you offer more opportunities to your students?

2 Evaluate your school. Could you be more effective at a different grade level or somewhere else?

3 Develop a philosophy for doing what you do. It may be as simple as "I teach to help students" or "I teach to share my love of Spanish." Post your philosophy on your bulletin board or in your plan book as a reminder.

4 Remind yourself of the importance of teaching. Remember the bumper stickers that said,

"If you can read this, thank a teacher"? Well, it's true. I often ask myself, "Where would I be if I hadn't had such wonderful teachers?"

Being a teacher will also allow you to continue to be a learner. Lifelong learning will keep you young.

Having a strong philosophy about what you do and why you do it will not only help you to succeed your first year of teaching, but every year that you teach.

READ: *Put Your Oxygen Mask on First...and Other Strategies for Succeeding as a Teacher*, Mary C. Clement.

Remember learning the golden rule when you were in elementary school? Well, the golden rule holds true for working with parents, other teachers, and administrators. We should always remember to treat parents the way that we would want our child's teacher to treat us. The following checklists are good guidelines for making phone calls, preparing and distributing written information, conducting parent conferences and communicating with colleagues.

TELEPHONING PARENTS

I once asked a group of first-year teachers how they made calls to parents. After a long pause, one teacher responded that after dialing she thought to herself, "Please don't answer, please don't answer." Phoning and confronting parents intimidated her. Make calling parents easier with the following suggestions.

1 Call parents early and often. Calling parents a few days before school starts is a good way to introduce yourself. Calling with good news early in the semester makes later calls easier to make.

2 Develop a checklist for your parent phone calls. Create a worksheet that you fill out ahead of time. This will help you to organize your thoughts. Include the following on your worksheet:

- ▶ Identify yourself to a parent and find out with whom you are speaking.
- ▶ State why you have called—to introduce yourself, to give good news, or to discuss a concern.
- ▶ If you are calling with a problem or concern, state the problem clearly. State behaviors, not opinions. "John has not turned in the last three homework assignments" will be a more valuable statement than "John has become lazy about the class."
- ▶ State a possible solution to the problem. Parents are busy people and want to know solutions.
- ▶ Listen to parents for additional solutions and background. They have known this child longer than you!
- ▶ Find a diplomatic, yet assertive way to get off the phone. Example: "I appreciate your concern, and hope that you will make an

appointment to meet with me during conference week. Right now, I have three other parents to call. Thanks so much for your help."

- ▶ Let parents know when and how they can reach you.
- ▶ Date and keep copies of your notes from telephone conversations. Some teachers write information on a notecard during the call, then add the card to the student's file.

3 READ:

- ▶ *Parents on Your Side*, Lee Canter and Marlene Canter
- ▶ *Winning Year One: A Survival Manual for First Year Teachers*, Carol Fuery.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Written communication can be less intimidating to the beginning teacher. That doesn't mean it should be used as a substitute to phone calls, however, but it could be a very effective method to communicate with parents on a regular basis. Use the following checklist to guide you in your written communications.

1 Make sure that letters home are printed clearly and contain correct spelling and grammar.

2 Announce the class calendar in your newsletters. Let parents know the dates for district- and state-wide testing, as well as other important dates.

3 Advertise your class in the newsletters home. Tell parents about the units that you will cover and involve them in some assignments with their child. For example: Announce that the class will be learning the vocabulary for food words in

Spanish class and you hope that the students will teach their parents these words at mealtimes the next two weeks. If you are studying recent American history, have students interview parents, or have students interview a grandparent.

4 Keep copies of ALL correspondence sent home to parents.

5 If you want parents to return a portion of the newsletter, or respond, make a section for comments and explain how they can mail the form back, or send it with their student.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Planning parent conferences should be done in advance. If you are prepared to welcome parents into your room, you will communicate confidence and competence. Use the checklist below to ready yourself for conferences.

1 Find out who schedules the conferences at your school. If you schedule your own, let parents know exactly when and where to meet with you.

2 Clean up the classroom and make it look the very best possible. You may need to request a table and adult-sized chairs before the conferences. As a tall adult, I know that nothing is worse than trying to sit in a first-grader's chair! Also, sitting with the parent at a table gets you away from the teacher's desk and creates a more cooperative atmosphere.

3 Keep the conferences on schedule. Many parents must take time off work to attend, so make every effort to adhere to a reasonable schedule. Also, don't let one set of parents wait in the back

of the room where they can hear your discussion with another parent. Respect confidentiality.

Be professional with parents—always stand to greet them and shake hands.

Dress appropriately for conferences. In many school districts this means wearing a suit, much as you would to the job interview. Ask a veteran teacher what is appropriate in your district.

Choose a point of focus, then gather representative samples of student's work to discuss with parents.

READ: *Student Portfolios*, Laura Grosvenor, et al.

Provide handouts to parents about how they can help their child read, learn vocabulary, etc.

If you make commitments with the parents at a conference (agreeing to tutor the child, or to send home weekly reports) write them down in your plan book or calendar. It is very important that you follow through with the commitments made during the conference.

If a parent becomes angry or abusive toward you, end the conference and get some help from a colleague. Some schools now hold all parent conferences in the gymnasium or cafeteria to avoid problems. Each teacher has an individual table, but other teachers and administrators are in the room. Suggest this to your school if there have been frequent problems.

Begin and end parent conferences with positives. Always thank the parents for their support and for taking the time to attend the conference.

Be a public relations expert and sell your school and class to all parents. So often the media reports bad news about schools. As teachers,

we know that good things take place every day in our schools.

- ▶ Work with your administrators and/or teacher's association to provide articles to the local newspaper about ongoing innovative and successful programs.
- ▶ Become a presenter at state and national conferences to share information about your school's successes.
- ▶ Create awards programs for the students and teachers at your school. Invite parents to attend.
- ▶ Accentuate the positive.

13 READ: *Are You Still Teaching? A Survival Guide to Keep You Sane*, Carol Fuery

COMMUNICATING WITH COLLEAGUES AND ADMINISTRATORS

Too often, beginning teachers isolate themselves from their colleagues and administrators. A key to continued success in teaching is communicating with other faculty and staff. The administration and staff can provide you with feedback and ideas to aid you in continued success. Use the checklist below to help with this.

1 Whenever you send a newsletter to parents, send one to your principal also.

2 Share your class calendar and newsletters by posting them on a bulletin board in the teachers' workroom. It really helps to know what other teachers in the building are doing.

3 Schedule appointments to meet with your principal, if he/she does not meet with you regularly. Write up a mini-agenda for your meetings so that they can be productive. Let your principal know what you are teaching and about student successes. When the administration knows what you are doing, they are in a better position to provide help and supplies.

4 When requesting additional supplies and materials, emphasize how students will benefit.

5 While we would all like all of our supplies to be readily available, this is not always possible. Consider making a joint request with another teacher and sharing the supplemental books, markers, etc.

6 Keep a portfolio of your work. Include best lesson plans, samples of student assignments, pictures of bulletin boards, and agendas from conferences you attend. Share this portfolio with your administrators to help them understand your hard work.

7 Find out early in the school year when you will be evaluated and how. If the principal uses a checklist evaluation, you should be able to see the criteria on the checklist before the evaluation. After an evaluation your administrator should schedule a conference to share the results with you.

8 Congratulate the principal and your colleagues when they are successful.

9 Do not ask other teachers to excuse your students from class unless it is absolutely necessary, and then do not make a habit out of it! We all need every minute of the school day for the business of teaching and learning.

10 When working with other teachers who come to your room for art, music, tutoring, or other

special services, remember to plan in advance and adhere to planned schedules.

11 Try to never disagree about scheduling in front of the students. Even first graders have been known to say, "my teacher had a fight with so-and-so and my teacher won (or lost)."

12 Educators must support each other in word and deed because that what real professionals do.

33

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Frequently, first-year teachers are so excited about having a class of their "own" that they fail to arm themselves with plans for classroom management. Going into your first year of teaching with a plan for managing your class, getting to know your students, and communicating relevance of your subject will give you a head start to success. You can adapt the strategies in this section to fit your needs.

CREATE WORKABLE PLANS

Discipline—commonly something they don't teach enough of in teacher preparation classes. How are you going to manage your classes? Successful veteran teachers offer the following techniques for success.

1 **READ** about classroom management and discipline.

- ▶ *The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8)*, Karen A. Bosch and Katharine C. Kersey
- ▶ *Succeeding with Difficult Students*, Lee Canter and Associates
- ▶ *Assertive Discipline*, Lee Canter and Associates
- ▶ *Behavior Management in the Middle School Classroom*, Lee Canter and Associates
- ▶ *The First Days of School*, Harry Wong
- ▶ *Discipline Strategies for the Bored, Belligerent, and Ballistic in Your Classroom*, Carol Fuery Ruot

2 Greet students at the door, saying hello and making small talk. Try shaking hands at the door every Monday, or the first day back from long vacations.

3 Have routines that students follow every day for entering and leaving your room. These can include:

- ▶ Always have an assignment posted on the board or overhead projector so that students know on what to begin working when they enter the room.
- ▶ Post an outline of what you will cover during the class on the board or overhead projector screen. Refer to this and always

let students know what is next on the agenda.

- Have a pick-up table by the door to your room where students get everything they need for that class (workbooks, handouts, even pencils). File graded papers in individual folders with each student's name so that the student can pick up his/her work as they enter the door. This avoids having a student pass out graded papers—and it saves you from doing it, too.
- If students are in your room all day, have a routine for taking lunch count and other housekeeping chores. Some teachers put each student's name on a popsicle stick and have students put their stick in a can labeled "hot lunch" if they are eating lunch that day. Make your system easy and "do-able" by the students.

4 Maintain eye contact with students and develop a "teacher stare" that can stop potential problems before they happen.

5 Develop a teacher voice that is a concerned tone of voice, indicating that you are serious. If confronted by a student, lower your voice and speak slowly, but very seriously.

6 Always be on your feet, moving around the room.

7 Know the school's policies for management and how to get back-up help. You may want to develop a plan with a teacher down the hall for back-up help. If you send a student to that teacher, he/she will know that you need immediate support.

8 Develop a classroom management plan that has rules, motivators, and consequences. Develop your plan as part of the school's plan, since building level support is important in making your plan succeed. If there is no building level plan, form

a committee of teachers and administrators to make a plan.

9 Limit your rules to no more than five. These rules must be realistic, observable, and enforceable by you. Good rules include:

- ▶ Follow directions.
- ▶ Hands, feet, and objects to yourself.
- ▶ Be seated when the bell rings.
- ▶ No interrupting or loud discussions.
- ▶ No swearing or put-downs.

One teacher made a rule that said, "Keep all extremities to yourself." Of course, she then had to teach the meaning of the word "extremities" to her class!

10 Avoid making a phrase such a "be nice" or "be kind" as a rule. These phrases are great goals and can be posted around the room, but are difficult to enforce because they lack the clarity of a rule.

11 Post the rules. Teach them to the students. It can be very helpful to have a democratic class meeting about the rules the first day of class. Many teachers lead the discussion, monitoring the wording of the rules, but still getting student input.

12 Give a quiz on your classroom rules. Re-teach and remind on the first days back from vacation.

13 Make sure that parents have a copy of the rules and consequences.

14 Consequences need to be reasonable and planned in advance.

- ▶ Make a warning your first consequence. It can defuse a situation and allow a student to cool down.
- ▶ Calling parents can be an effective consequence, as can a time-out or detention.

- Give students choices, and remind students that they have chosen their consequences.
- Don't argue with students. Simply state their consequence, sounding like a broken record. This can be a very effective way of avoiding a lot of "back and forth" with the student.
- If you teach the rules effectively, you can simply walk over to the poster on the wall and remind students by pointing to the rule and nodding at the offender as a warning.
- Don't make silly "if-then" statements with students. Saying, "If you don't quit doing that, I'll just throw you out the window," will never work.

15 Make positive statements and use students' names. "John, do the first six problems on the worksheet." Then thank the student.

16 Motivators do not have to be candy and food. Reward students with smiles, free time, talk time, media center passes, computer time, and word games.

- Some rewards may seem like punishment to students. Having lunch with the teacher can be a big reward for an eight year-old, but it may indeed be a punishment to a junior in high school!
- Eventually students have to motivate themselves.
- Let students know who you really are and that you believe in their abilities to succeed.

ASSESS STUDENTS' INTERESTS AND KNOWLEDGE

A wise, experienced teacher once told me, "You can't teach students whom you don't know." Get to know your students and their interests from the very first day of school. Use this knowledge to show interest in their lives and relate the things they are learning to their "real" life.

1 Make and use a seating chart. One good way to do this is to put each student's name on a sticky notes square. You can attach these little squares to a piece of paper and put into a sheet protector (plastic sheet protectors are available at any discount or paper store), allowing you to move students around without rewriting your seating charts. Just open the sheet protector, change the square, and you have a new chart.

2 Have students make namecards for their desks. Young students can draw on theirs to personalize them. Ask older students to write their name and a favorite book, TV show, or favorite food.

3 Make sure that students know each other's names. Play memory games so that you and the students can learn each other's names.

4 Take instant snapshots and build a bulletin board with pictures. Title the board "The Graduates of the Year."

5 Ask students to complete interest inventories, where they finish statements such as, "In my free time I like to..." "If I won $500 I would..." "I like to read..."

6 Create icebreaker games for the students where each has a handout and must find another person who "likes pepperoni pizza," "has a

cat," "has long hair," "walks to school," "likes to dance," "swims," "plays a musical instrument." This activity can to be designed differently for different grade levels.

7 Never ask embarrassing information about parents, siblings, or home life.

8 Assess what students know about the subject matter. If most of the class studied dinosaurs last year, it may only bore them this year.

9 Determine what the students know and build on it. Today's students are quite sophisticated and need lively classes to hold their interest.

10 Don't assume that students know something just because they are in a certain grade.

11 READ: *Keys to the Classroom*, Carol Moran et al.

ACCEPT TODAY'S STUDENTS

As I teach workshops for teachers, I often begin by asking the questions, "How would you describe your students?" "What are their backgrounds?" and "Do your students come to school ready to learn?" Answer these questions for yourself at this time, developing a picture in your mind of "today's students." Then ask yourself, "Do my students have real stress?" and "Do they have real problems?"

1 Many of your students do not come to school ready to learn. While we have to accept this, we also have to go beyond this and create "teachable moments" so that we also create readiness to learn.

2 While it is admirable to want to solve every student's problem, we cannot do this.

However, there are things that we can do that will help us to accept all students who come into our classrooms.

Be a keen observer of your students. Recognize when they are tired, or worried, or when the whole class seems jittery over an upcoming event. Allowing students to vocalize concerns during a class meeting will help them to overcome worries and settle down into the class routine.

Listen to the students. Many students do not have adults at home who have the time (or patience) to listen to them. Allow students time to talk with you and with each other.

Find out your school and district policies for referring students for special help from counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Of course, you will want to work with parents throughout the referral process.

Bring speakers into your class for special programs. If a student in your class is in a car accident, bring in the school counselors to help the students deal with their loss.

Integrate life themes into reading, writing, and other subjects. If the students read a novel where the main character faces a tough decision, follow up with a writing assignment about decisions that all of us make every day.

Be the positive adult role model that your students need.

Create a family atmosphere in your classroom. You can do this by discussing what a family is, and what roles each member plays in a family. Ask students to brainstorm in pairs about how the class is like a family.

10 Teach students how to get along with each other. Include conflict resolution in the curriculum. Teach and model respect.

11 Remember that the most challenging students may need you the very most. These students may not have a positive adult in their lives and that is why they really need their classroom teacher. They need you as a teacher, but above all as an adult who accepts them and respects them.

12 READ:

- *Teaching Students to Get Along*, Lee Canter and Katia Peterson
- *Bound for Success*, Bert Simmons

VARYING TEACHING STRATEGIES TO REACH TODAY'S STUDENTS

I will never forget attending an all day computer workshop two years ago where the instructor introduced himself, passed out workbooks, and said, "You each have a computer. The exercises are self-paced. Begin and good luck!" I felt cheated. I did not learn well by this method. I wanted the instructor to demonstrate the first examples on his computer, attached to a big screen for me to see. Then I wanted to do an example on my machine, discuss the results with the group, see another demo, etc. I left the workshop early and asked for a refund. If I were a public school student I wouldn't have had that option. Instead I would have probably chosen to retreat in a corner and do nothing (getting an F in computers) or tried to get attention by causing a discipline problem.

So, the question becomes, how do we reach the students who learn by watching the demo and still

reach the ones who learn by working through the book at their own pace? Variety is the best answer.

1 Don't ask, "How can I teach this material to my students?" Ask, "How can my students learn this material?"

2 Have students read, memorize, talk, present, watch, do, practice, participate, sing, act, write, discuss, count, and solve in order to learn.

3 Divide students into groups where they can investigate questions together.

4 Have individual activities where students can work at their own pace.

5 Try paired activities for brainstorming ideas for writing assignments.

6 Have the whole class read a short story, then have small groups develop different endings.

7 After reading a story or novel, put posters up around the room with different characters' name on each. Have students move around the room writing descriptions of the characters on the posters. This is a good review and also a good introduction for discussion questions. Social studies teachers can do the same activity substituting the names of presidents, etc.

8 Write the test before you teach the unit.

- ▶ As you write the test you will be prioritizing the material and developing goals and objectives.
- ▶ Let students know the material the test will cover.
- ▶ If students know what to study and do not prepare, they have chosen to do poorly.

9 Many students love video games. They like the fact that their skills are rewarded instant-

ly and that when they succeed at a certain level the game generally becomes more challenging. Today's students need this level of challenge in the classroom, too.

10 Make learning engaging. If they are actively reading, thinking, problem solving, building, writing, and producing, students will be learning.

11 READ: *Superteaching: Master Strategies for Building Student Success*, Eric Jensen.

THE SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENT

In most schools today every effort is being made to include special education students into the regular classroom. Find out about the special needs students in your classroom. Modifying assignments and using special teaching techniques are necessary to reach these students.

1 Always find out what help and resources are available for you with regard to special needs students. Many schools have teams of special educators to help classroom teachers, but you have to ask for their assistance and work collaboratively with other educators to get this support.

2 READ:

- *A Survival Kit for the Special Education Teacher*, Roger Pierangelo
- *Ideas for Inclusion*, Anne M. Beninghof
- *Exceptions: A Handbook of Inclusion Activities for Teachers of Students at Grades 6-12 with Mild Disabilities*, Deborah A. Murphy, et al.
- *Toward Inclusive Classrooms*, Rita Wright Johnson, et al.

3 Many new teachers have told me that while they tried to meet the needs of **all** students, they felt that they neglected the needs of the "best and brightest" in the classroom. While it can be said that it is indeed a challenge to challenge the gifted students every day, we need to motivate them to their full potential. Many bright students quit learning because the materials presented to them are boring!

4 READ: *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom*, Susan Winebrenner.

ADVICE FROM CYBERSPACE

For this section, we used the Internet to gather advice for new teachers by posting this message on various message boards:

We need your help. We are creating a new publication in our Checklist Series. We want to include some of your best thinking about how new teachers can be successful in their first year, thereby helping to ensure that they stay in the profession for a second year and beyond. We need you to send us your top ten (or fewer) list of bright ideas for new teachers.

MORE BRIGHT IDEAS

In this list, we hope you will find a few helpful hints and that you will see how this section is an illustration of how beginning teachers can use the Internet as a resource for more bright ideas.

1 Get copies of the curriculum and the textbooks for the subject(s) you will be teaching and familiarize yourself with them over the summer.

2 Know exactly what skills need to be covered during the year, so in May you don't say, "Really, I was supposed to teach that?!"

3 Go to the school (or local public) library and find some relevant supplementary materials you can use to enrich the curriculum, including audio-visuals.

4 Learn to operate all of the equipment that you will be using, e.g., projectors, recorders, computers, copy machines.

5 Before school starts, find out where supplies are stored and, if necessary, who has the key.

6 Plan your "opening day" display for bulletin boards and other places in your room so that the atmosphere will be welcoming.

7 Learn about reporting requirements.

- ▶ What grading system is used?
- ▶ How often are "report cards" sent home?
- ▶ Is interim reporting customary in this school system?

8 If there is a school handbook that explains staff responsibilities (like where to take students during fire drills and what time you are

expected to arrive and leave the building), ask for a copy well before the first day of school.

9 Request a copy of the master agreement or current contract from the local association so you know what has been negotiated.

10 If the community is new to you, find out all that you can about its demographic make-up, the diversity of the population, and possible community resources.

11 Take a tour. Get to know the history of the place where you have come to teach—attractions, regional economics, and so on.

12 Make lesson plans at least a week in advance. It's best to over-plan and to make the plans clear enough so a substitute can implement them.

13 Plan like a professional. Your lessons might not always work out, and you will probably be revising by Tuesday, but nothing is as unprofessional as poor planning. You will also have more confidence and fewer things to worry about if your plans are complete. Do not come in on Monday with loose ends to take care of. Be prepared!

14 Gather all needed materials ahead of time.

15 Find a wise, experienced teacher (if the school system does not have a mentor program) and ask a lot of questions all year.

16 Once a week, use your planning time to observe another teacher in action. You can never have enough observation time to appreciate all the techniques that a master teacher uses. You will learn a tremendous amount by watching the way other teachers instruct, relate, discipline, and inspire. (It doesn't even necessarily have to be in your area or grade level; look for teachers who have the reputation of being "great teachers.")

17 Get to know the janitors. They are extremely important if you need something.

18 Secretaries? I'll give you just four words: "They run the school." Be very good to them. Give them flowers or candy every now and then.

19 Make sure to make time for yourself. You need to stay fresh.

20 Talk with other teachers. You don't have to know it all.

21 Keep records of what you do, both administratively and creatively. It helps when you want to evaluate what you want to change and what you want to keep as is.

22 Take pictures—of the students, of your creative centers, and of others' ideas.

23 Teach the students how to learn; don't just teach them facts. Show them that learning can be fun. Encourage questions.

24 Make checklists of things to remember to do. You will impress others when you actually remember everything you need to do the first year!

25 Communicate constantly with other teachers on the staff.

26 Eat your lunch with the other teachers. Don't sit in your room and get extra work done or go off campus. A lot of current issues in education, student concerns, and "hot topics" are discussed in the teachers' lounge. You can learn a lot from veterans. Listen more than you speak. If you speak, remain positive. Too much negativity sends out a bad signal.

27 Join your union and go to union meetings. You won't be "black-balled" by the administration. If it makes you uncomfortable, just go and listen...but listen well!

28 Move around the room. You need to circulate to see how all your students are progressing and to implement proximity discipline.

29 Try not to let observations throw you. Teach a normal lesson without creating a circus to impress your observer. He or she wants to see what a normal day in your class looks like. Listen to suggestions made and act upon them. An observer is there to help you become more successful, not to tear you apart.

30 Create a mix of assignments. If you can correct some in class, rather than requiring a lot of your time, you will feel less bogged down and you won't have to lug everything home to do yourself.

31 Grade papers immediately. Don't develop the habit of saving it for Sunday nights.

32 Be flexible. Go with the flow of schedule changes and special requests. Don't complain that changes compromise your curriculum. Someday you will be the one asking for something, and the level of cooperation you can expect is equal to the cooperation you gave.

33 Plan lessons that you think will interest the students and keep them actively involved. Nothing creates discipline problems like bored students. If your students are busy with their activities, they won't have enough time to be looking for "other" things to do.

34 Join several committees to learn what's going on. I started by joining the School Improvement Council and Teacher's Association. It's a great way to meet new people in a new system. Many of the administrators seemed intimidating, but after many interactions through various committees, we are on a first name basis.

35 Document any and all courses and workshops you attend. Many states now require continu-

ing education for re-certification. Having documentation together and organized from the start really helps.

36 Attend seminars in subject matter areas conducted by the supervisors in that district and visit with teachers for reflections on practice and to discuss strategies.

37 Initiate and maintain open communication, both written and oral, with parents.

38 Treat your students with respect.

39 Keep a good sense of humor.

40 Keep a teacher diary for reflection.

41 Start a file collection. Anytime I see something of interest, be it an article or a great book, I photocopy it, put it in a file folder and label it. My file cabinet is jam-packed with endless ideas for all grade levels. Believe me, it has helped me tons. In my seven-years experience, I've taught 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th. As a new teacher, you never know what grade you'll have the next year.

42 Keep a "happy folder." It has saved me on my teary-eyed days when I've thought about quitting teaching. On a file folder I put stickers and happy faces all over it—inside I keep notes from parents who have written to tell me what a great teacher I am, and how I've done wonderfully with their child. So when I'm feeling really crummy, I take out these great notes about what a terrific person I am.

This checklist was compiled from submissions posted online or emailed by the following contributors:

Bonnie Bracey
Arlington Career Center
Arlington, Virginia

Mary Lou Berry
Retired teacher
Euclid, Ohio

Charles M. Breinin
Bennett High School
Buffalo, New York

Pat Brock
Sharon Caudill
Terry Humphrey (first year teacher)
Minors Lane Elementary School
Louisville, Kentucky

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FOR TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEGINNING TEACHER RESOURCES

Need help finding professional resources? Is a workable classroom management plan eluding you? Looking for more information on using technology with your students?

To help you find answers, this list of resources has been compiled for you to take with you to the library or bookstore. This list not only includes books and journal articles for beginning teachers and for any teacher interested in using technology in the classroom, it also includes a sampling of Internet resources.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

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Maryland Virtual High School—How students in Maryland are using the internet and computers in their schools.
http://www.mbhs.edu/mvhs.html

The Division of Career and Technology Education—Offers school-to-work ideas. Their "mission is to assist and support schools to implement these 21st century programs."
http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/cte/

Louisiana Lessons: Integrating Technology, Curricular and State Resources—A guidebook for integrating the internet into mathematics, science, and language arts curricula.
http://etrc33.usl.edu/lessons/lalessons/

Integrating Technology—A list of internet links for sites on integrating technology. Very useful for both teachers and students.
http://jawbone.clarkston.wednet.edu/pages/Integrating.html

Integrating Technology into the Curriculum—Bowling Green School District believes in using technology as an instructional tool. See their philosophy here.
http://www.b-g.k12.ky.us/tech/integrating_tech.htm

Integrating Technology in the Classroom: Children and Email—An article that outlines how one fourth grade teacher dealt with the problem of obscene email in the classroom.
http://www.hbschool.com/harcourtpages/issuesideas/techclassroom.html

Integrating Technology into the Curriculum 9-12—An overview of several teachers use of technology in their curricula.
http://www.kings.k12.ca.us/cvrpdc/promhead/technolo/integatc/integrt.htm

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Internet Sites

A Beginning Teacher Support Provider's Personal Home Page—provides useful links for the beginning teacher put together by a support provider in California.
http://lausd.k12.ca.us/~alewis/

Beginning Teachers—This site suggests some practical, simple, and flexible guidelines for beginning teachers.
http://tikkun.ed.asu.edu/~aeis/129_1.html

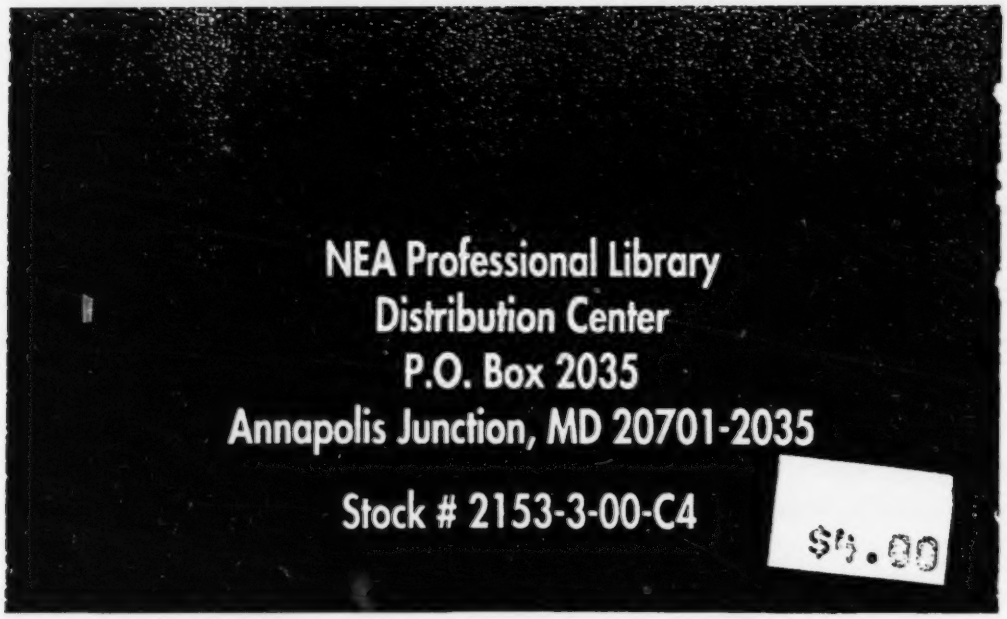
The Praxis Series, Educational Testing Service—information about beginning teacher testing for over 30 states. Contains state-by-state requirements, information on where to take tests, and when they are offered.
http://www.ets.org/praxis

You Don't Have To Be 2nd Bananas (Lesson Plan Organizer)—This website contains a lesson plan form and other useful information.
http://www.indep.k12.mo.us/ths/lesley/cavole/dont.html

What New Haven Has to Offer—Employment Opportunities—An example of a web-based job search.
http://www.nhusd.k12.ca.us/Personnel/

North State Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Project—a site dedicated to supporting beginning teachers, contains links and other information.
http://www.rbuhsd.k12.ca.us/btsadocs/btsa.html

Career Services—Sample letters and resumes for beginning teachers.
http://www.unl.edu/careers/ees/



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